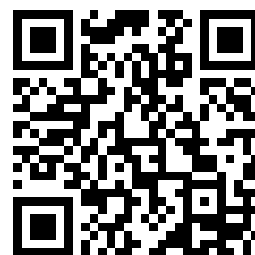

This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

GoogleTM books

<http://books.google.com>



40
H. Eccl.
543iz

40

H. eel. 4^o 543 47 Mullooly



<36632033440011

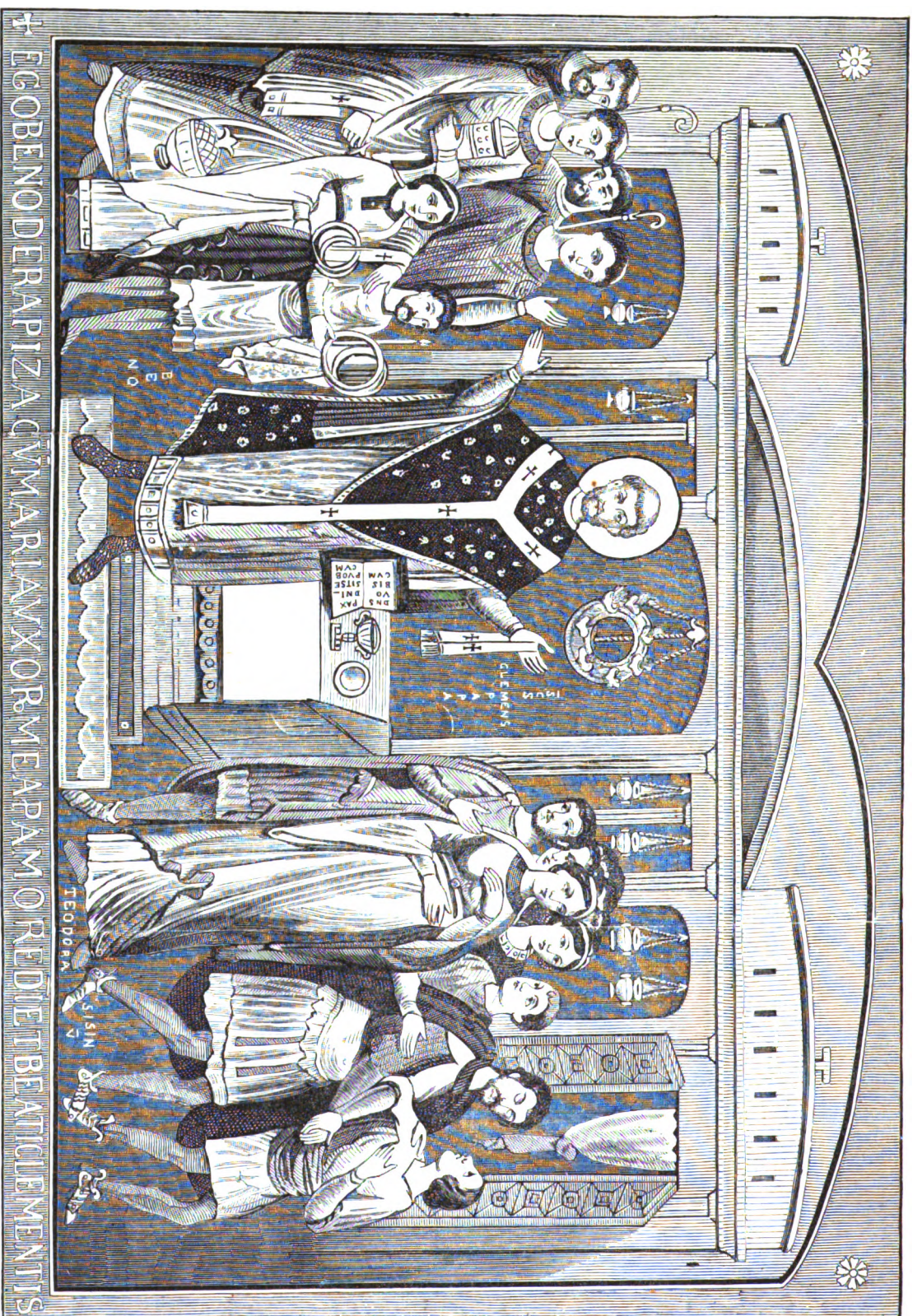
S

<36632033440011

Bayer. Staatsbibliothek

THE BASILICA
OF
S. CLEMENT
IN ROME.

= Gesch. 945



ECTYPON VETVSTISSIMAE PICTVRAE IN HYPOGEO BASILICAE S. CLEMENTIS
 INVENTAE AN. MDCCCLXI.

**A BRIEF NOTICE
OF THE ANCIENT PAINTINGS
FOUND
IN THE SUBTERRANEAN BASILICA
OF
S. CLEMENT IN ROME,**

**THE DATES OF WHICH VARY FROM THE END OF THE THIRD
TO ABOUT THE BEGINNING OF THE TENTH CENTURY,**

BY

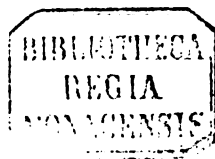
REVD. JOSEPH MULLOOLY O. P.



ROME

PRINTED AT THE PROPAGANDA-PRESS

1866.



A BRIEF NOTICE OF THE ANCIENT PAINTINGS

FOUND IN THE SUBTERRANEAN BASILICA

OF S. CLEMENT IN ROME.

Between the Coliseum and the Cathedral Basilica of the Lateran, *omnium urbis et orbis Ecclesiarum Mater et Caput*. Opposite the fortified monastery of the Four Crowned Martyrs, where Robert Guiscard took up his quarters when he came to succour Gregory VII: on the site of S. Clement's paternal house, at the foot of the Coelian hill, was erected a Church dedicated to God in honour of that illustrious Pope and Martyr, which was held to be one of the most venerable in Rome, and the most perfect in its ancient Catholic Basilican type. Clement the Pope, Clement the Consul, Ignatius of Antioch, were the Martyrs whose relics hallowed it. Servulus of Rome and Cyril of Sclavonia, were the Confessors whose remains enriched it. S. Jerome spoke of its guarding S. Clement's memory up to his day. It was witness to the condemnation of the Scotch Pelagian Celestius under Pope S. Zosimus. S. Leo the Great, and Pope S. Symmacus, made mention of it. It had resounded to the preaching of S. Gregory the Great. Other Popes honoured and adorned it. It was then a lesson of modesty to the antiquary, and a cause of thankfulness to Divine Providence, when, in 1857, the real Constantinian Basilica, to which alone these facts applied, was discovered, purposely filled up with earth,

beneath the present structure. Masaccio's history of S. Catharine of Alexandria had seemed ancient: here below are fragments of paintings, and some admirably preserved compositions dating from the third to the ninth or tenth Century: marble columns precious and unique: the ruined walls, and portions of the mosaic pavement, of a primitive Basilica abandoned and unknown for nearly a thousand years. The task of removing the rubbish, with which it was filled, was much less than that of supplying masonry to support the upper Church. It is however now, in 1866, almost completed, thanks to the munificent donations of Pius IX, and the generous contributions of many lovers of Archaeological Science, Protestant as well as Catholic.

Beneath, and accessible to the visitor, have been discovered three walls that respectively belong to the three distinct periods of the history of Pagan Rome, the Imperial-Republican-and Kingly. The brick wall is supposed to belong to Clement's house: it is not known for what purpose the travertine wall served: the *tuffo lithoide* wall is, with great probability, said to be part of the walls of Servius Tullius. Several chambers, considered to be the original chambers of the house of Clement, exist below the unearthed Basilica. The rare and precious pillars of this venerable Temple are still in their places, partly hidden by piers of brick, built to strengthen the edifice. These served as the ground for a series of very remarkable frescos, unique in the history of Christian art, and most interesting in as much as many of them are votive pictures. They are certainly the earliest, and

largest, christian wall paintings we know of, outside the Catacombs: and, independently of religious interest, curious and valuable for the history of art, as it came forth from its catacombic recesses, and past through the hands of the early Italian painters into the modern school. They have been carefully, and well copied in colour, and photographs made from the copies. To assist the stranger who visits S. Clemente, or may take an interest in the paintings discovered in it, we give a slight consecutive notice of most of them.

A life of S. Clement, with some account of his Basilica in Rome, is being prepared for the press by the writer of these lines.

NORTHERN AISLE

FIRST PICTURE FOUND. — Martyrdom of S. Catharine of Alexandria, supposed to be the oldest of this subject in existence. Her history is painted by Masaccio in the Church above. This noble and learned lady braved the brutal passion of the Emperor Maximin, converted the heathen philosophers who argued against Christianity; was tortured upon the wheel, and beheaded in 310. In 313 Maximin was defeated by Licinius, lost the Empire, and died in misery at Tarsus. Writers have said that this saint was not venerated in Europe before the second Crusade; a mistake perhaps arising from her relics having been given to Robert Duke of Normandy, by a monk from Palestine, at the close of the eleventh Century. The first Crusade promoted by Peter the Hermit, was agreed upon at Clermont in 1095: and it was in the eighth Century,

when the Saracens oppressed the Christians in Egypt, that her body was translated to the monastery on Sinai in Arabia, first built by the Empress S. Helen and afterwards beautified by the Emperor Justinian, as several old inscriptions and mosaic pictures testify. The fresco we are treating of is little more than an outline, and was probably done between the seventh and eighth Centuries. The centre has perished. On the left she stands before the judge; on the right tied naked to the wheel: below decapitated. S. Paul of Latra celebrated her festival with great solemnity and devotion. The principal part of her mortal remains is still preserved in a marble urn in the Church dedicated to her on mount Sinai: FOR AN ACCOUNT OF WHICH SEE DR. RICHARD POCKOCK'S TRAVELS vol. 1. page 140.

II.

NICHE OF THE MADONNA. — When first discovered this painting of our Lady was concealed by another, much ruder, painted upon a coat of plaster which fell away. On the arch is the head of the Saviour, beardless like that in the Catacombs. On the left side Abraham brandishing the sword to strike: in the other hand was a chalice, overflowing with blood, which has fallen away. On the opposite right side the Angel is shielding Isaac. « Lay not thy hand upon the boy, neither do thou » anything to him: now I know that thou fearest God, » and hast not spared thy only begotten son for my sake.» *Gen. XX. 12.* The true Child of sacrifice sitting on his Mother's lap, and holding a scroll in his left hand, while

his right is raised in the attitude of blessing. The throne is highly ornamented, and the headdress of the Virgin Mother jewelled. High upon the walls that support the vault of this niche, and opposite each other are the figures of two female Saints, with jewelled crowns surmounted by crosses. That on the left of the spectator is S. Catharine, and the one on the right S. Euphemia the famous virgin martyr of Chalcedon. Her Church was in Rome under S. Gregory the Great, in 600, who delivered two homilies in S. Clement's; and this picture is probably of the same age.

III.

This large picture is difficult to explain. From the symmetrical arrangement of the heads which are well executed and preserved, 19 in one group and 32 in the other, the rest being destroyed which occupied the centre, the subject was a public spectacle: probably the Council held by Pope S. Zosimus in this Church in 417 to condemn the Pelagian heresy. On the right is a steelyard equally poised, with the inscription « *stateram auget modium justum;* » « a just measure increases the beam, » which in that manner of weighing is evident. Or as this seems the entrance, there may be an allusion to that sentence quoted so often by S. Clement « The City set upon the mount cannot be hidden; nor do they light a candle and put it under the *modium*, but upon a *candelabrum* that it may shine to all who are in the house, that those who are entering in may see the light. » In the first epistle to James, S. Clement is represented as directing the priests

to hear the business of the brethern instead of secular judges. Moreover, *pondera; mensuras, stateras, pro locis quibusque aequissima custodite: deposita fideliter restituite*. Weights, measures, steelyards, keep most accurate for every place: deposits faithfully restore.

IV..

A mutilated figure of the Saviour, blessing with his right hand, and holding in his left two books placed over each other, probably representing the books of the Old and New Testament. This fresco is rudely painted, and the only thing that enhances its artistic value is the gracefully executed arabesque border that surrounds it.

V.

SOUTHERN AISLE. — The wall at the end of this aisle near the high altar contains some fragments of the paintings which covered it. Two feet on the cross reversed indicate the Crucifixion of S. Peter. Below, mutilated figures of Saints with halos; and an angelic face of rare beauty. A large globe, four small ones, and two birds pecking at streams of light which descend curling from the large globe, probably symbols of souls pecking at the light of truth. On the left S. Cyril, with the name written vertically behind him, kneels before the Emperor Michael the third, previous to starting for his mission to the Chazari in 848. Above are two angels. At right angles this great Apostle of the Slavonians is baptizing a person

of barbaric type, perhaps Boigoris Michael King of the Bulgarians who after Cyril's death renounced his crown and became a monk about 880. If the pictures referring to S. Cyril were painted upon his death in Rome they are of the end of the ninth Century.

VI.

On a pilaster S. Antoninus, probably the Saint of that name who suffered martyrdom under the reign of Diocletian. The ascetic Daniel who would not be defiled with the king's wine, and asked to be fed upon pulse and water, for which he was cast into the lions den. The ephod is upon his breast. Two lions lick his feet. His arms are outstretched in the attitude of prayer, and his eyes are raised to heaven. *S. Danihel* - S. Daniel, is written under his feet. Underneath is a beautiful border, and lower down still a group of five lions, four of which have their mouths open, and seem eager to pounce on their prey. The sublime dignity of the Prophet forms a striking contrast with the ferocious aspect of the beasts.

VII.

On the next pilaster S. Aegidius the celebrated Athenian hermit, ~~and~~ S. Giles who lead a solitary life at Nismes towards the end of the seventh and the beginning of the eighth century. He was greatly venerated in France and England. Below is S. Blase, Bishop of Sebaste in Armenia where he was martyred in 316. He is extracting

a thorn from a boy's throat, who is supported by his mother. He was patron of the guild of wool-combers at Norwich, who kept his feast in the last Century. In Rome upon his festival (February 3^d.) which is celebrated in the church of *S. Maria in Via Lata*, where S. Paul was lodged, a relic of his throat is venerated, and also, in a church dedicated to him in the *Via Giulia*, persons with diseased throats are touched with another relic. The wolf carrying away the pig refers to a story of his youth.

VIII.

We are now under the Chapel of S. Catharine. S. Gregory the Great who wrote to S. Augustine of Canterbury to be humble under the gifts of miracles, with which God graced him for the conversion of the Angli, has recounted the miracles of S. Benedict in his Dialogues. Here are depicted three others relating to the Benedictine Abbey of Fondi in Campagna. Libertinus a holy monk had such veneration for Honoratus the deceased Abbot, that he always carried a clog of his in his bosom. Honoratus' successor enraged one day against Libertinus took up a stool and beat him with it. Touched with remorse by the humility of Libertinus, who returned to speak to him about some monastic duty, he rose from his seat, prostrated himself at his feet, and begged his pardon. On another occasion as Libertinus was going on business of his monastery to Ravenna, a woman seized his horse by the bridle, and insisted that he should restore her child to life. The holy monk laid Honoratus' clog upon the boy's

breast, and he was forthwith restored to life. The third story S. Gregory says was told him by the superior of the monastery whom he knew very well. The gardner was annoyed by a thief breaking the enclosure to steal vegetables. He ordered a snake which he happened to see to guard the place. The thief mounted the hedge as usual, took fright at the snake, and fell so that his foot caught, and he could not escape. The monk on returning released him, and told him if he wanted vegetables again he would give them to prevent the sin of theft. The choice of these subjects may suggest that they were painted after S. Gregory's death in 604.

IX.

NAVE. — Here we have a large and well preserved series of paintings. On a pilaster near the high Altar, S. Peter is installing Clement and investing him with the *pallium*, Symbol of universal jurisdiction, whilst Linus and Cletus stand on either side of the throne, but in lower positions than Peter and Clement who are on the same level. Two Priests in the vestments of their order, and two soldiers in Roman military costume.

CENTRAL COMPARTMENT. Miraculous Conversion of Sisinus. — The interior of a Church lighted with seven lamps, symbols of the seven gifts of the holy Ghost. S. Clement in his pontifical robes saying mass at the Altar, which is covered with a plain white linen cloth, and upon it are the missal, the Chalice and paten. Above is a circular lamp, « *Pharum cum corona*, » with

seven small lights. Sisinius, the husband of the convert Theodora, has intruded upon the mysteries, and been struck blind for ridiculing them. Two youths, one of whom gazes earnestly in his face, are leading him to the open door. He afterwards recovered his sight through the prayers of S. Clement and Theodora, and embraced the Christian faith. On the other side are the ministers of the altar, and among them two bishops with croziers in their hands: The Deacon, and Subdeacon holding the censer in his right hand and the incense box in his left. All have the circular tonsure, and the Pope in addition to the tonsure has the nimbus or glory, symbol of sanctity. In front of the ministers are the figures of a man and woman holding in their hands lighted twisted tapers. They are the donors of the picture as we learn from the inscription underneath, which says, « I Beno Derapiza with Mary my wife for the love of God and Blessed Clement.» An elegant border separates this from the badly painted lower subjects.

Sisinius, in military costume, is giving directions to three men who are engaged in raising a column. All have their names written by them, Carvoncelle, Cosmaris and Albertel The moral appears under the arches. « For the hardness of your hearts you have deserved to draw stones.»

X.

This great picture the colours of which are almost as fresh as they were the day they had been laid on, represents the life of the popular Roman Saint, S. Alexis:

Three subjects in one. The ornamentation is peculiarly elegant, especially the lower panel of garlands of flowers, fruit, and birds.

In the upper compartment our Lord sits on a magnificent and richly decorated throne, holding an open book in his hand, on the pages of which are written « *fortis ut vincula mortis.* » strong as bonds of death. On either side of Him stand the Archangels with their golden censers, Michael the champion of the Church and Gabriel who told the humble handmaid that she was to be the Mother of God. The martyred Pope S. Clement is placed next to Michael: S. Nicholas Pope and Confessor next to Gabriel

The central compartment is illustrative of the life of S. Alexis, who lived in the begining of the fifth Century. Devoted to the poor, averse to the world, on his marriage day he fled to lead a virgin life dedicated to God. He was to that age somewhat similar to blessed Benedict Labrè in our own. In the central compartement we see him, on his return from Palestine, in the garb of a pilgrim, with his wallet and staff, asking hospitality of his Father the senator Euphimianus, who is pointing to his palace, on the Aventine, and evidently saying to him, « that is my residence, in it you shall find an asylum. » The forelorn bride is looking from the balcony. S. Alexis remained unknown in his Father's palace for a good many years; during which time he wrote an history of his life. At length having got sick, and knowing that his last moments were drawing near, he requested to see the Pope. S. Boniface the First who then governed the Church,

having heard of the pilgrim's request went to visit him, accompanied by the Roman clergy and his crossbearer. The moment the dying pilgrim saw the Pope, he consigned to him the manuscript which he would not confide to other hands, and expired. His poor father was present on that occasion, not knowing, of course, who the dying man was. The Pope is leaning over him giving the last absolution with his right hand. A little more to the right of the spectator is represented the recognition of the noble pilgrim saint. He is laid on a bier, covered with a red cloth decorated with crosses and birds, carrying lillies, symbols of purity, in their beaks: his former bride covers his face with kisses, and his aged parents, unable any longer to restrain their anguish, tear their hair through grief for not having not having known him. The inscription underneath says. «The Father knows not who for pity asks, the Pope holds the scroll which tells his austere life.»

XI.

S. PROSPER OF AQUITAINE. — Mōrgan, a Welsh monk of Bangor, who called himself Pelagius, and Celestius, a fellow, says S. Jerome «fed upon scotch porridge,» denied original sin, and the necessity of divine grace to initiate a virtuous life. S. Augustine confuted them. Pope Zosimus condemned them in 417. Pope Celestine sent S. Germanus of Auxerre as his vicar to England, and at Verulam, now S. Alban's, the Pelagians were signally discomfited. S. Prosper who was living in Provence finding some

French Priests infected with Pelagianism, wrote to S. Augustine and became an active opponent of that heresy. When S. Leo the Great became Pope in 440, he invited him to Rome, and made him his Secretary. Celestine had the Council of Ephesus painted in the Coemetry of Priscilla: but if the Council held in S. Clement's against the Pelagians was ever painted there, it has perished. The only memorial remaining, is this portrait of S. Prosper with his name written upon it. He wrote in Latin verse of which these lines are a sample.

Pestem subeuntem prima recidit
Sedes Roma Petri, quae pastoralis honoris
Facta caput mundo quicquid non possidet armis
Religione tenet.

XII.

A group of subjects probably arranged in connection with S. Prosper to vindicate original sin and sacramental grace. First, the Crucifixion, the oldest known mural painting of that event, referring to the atonement of original and actual sins. Our Lady, full of grace, and the Evangelist of the Divine Word made man with the gospel roll in his hand, are praying to Christ upon the Cross.

Secondly, the hope of Christians in that resurrection without which all is in vain, indicated by the two Marys at the sepulchre, before which a lamp is burning. The Angel is warning them that it is not in the tomb they are to seek him. «He has arisen, He is not here.»

In the central compartment, our Lord with a grave and affectionate action, in his glorified state indicated by the azure nimbus in which he is enveloped, has entered Limbo and is raising Adam by the hand, while Eve extends her arms in supplication towards him.

The word « *Architriclinus* » written vertically over the head of the man addressing our Lord in the lowest compartment identifies the miracle at Cana. The suggestive part of our Lady in that type of the Blessed Eucharist is shown by her position next to Christ. And the representation of the type itself referring to the greatest and most fruitful of sacramental means following upon the holocaust of the Cross, reminds us that in Adam all have sinned, stand in need of assisting grace, and may, if they please, receive it from the hands of the Priest in the Church, as Adam did from the great high Priest himself.

XIII.

The earliest known picture of the Assumption of the Mother of God. It is also typical in the highest degree of the power of grace. For it is the pious traditional belief of the Church that the flesh of that most perfect of the creatures of God, by immaculate Conception, exempted from every stain of Adam, born and ever living in closest communion with God, and consequently never subject to the slightest sin, was not suffered to see corruption nor to remain within the tomb, but united to her soul abides in glory with her Son. « Arise, O Lord,

» into thy resting place, thou and the Ark which thou
» hast sanctified.» 131 Ps.

Our Lord with the book in his hand is seated on his starry throne supported by four angels, in a manner not unworthy of the Beato Angelico.

Below, the Apostles finding the tomb empty are in various attitudes of surprise. The beloved disciple, who took his mother to his own house, holds the gospel roll with one hand, and places the other before his mouth in a manner reverential, and full of astonishment. S. Vitus, Archbishop of Vienna in 490, was probably placed next him on account of his opposition to the Arians who by denying our Lord's divinity deprived the Incarnation of its supernatural value as a remedy for sin, and by thus degrading the son to their own level reduced the Mother whom all generations shall call Blessed, and the Angel saluted «full of grace,» to the condition of any ordinary woman. Pope S. Leo the fourth is at the left. He has the green square nimbus to indicate that he was living at the time this picture was painted, which must be between 847. and 855.

XIV.

NARTHEX.— FUNERAL OF S. CYRIL, THE APOSTLE OF THE SCLAVONIANS. — The inscription below the elegant border says that Maria Macellaria had it painted «through fear of God and for the relief of her soul.» Another inscription above this says, «Hither the body (of S. Cyril) was brought from
» the Vatican, under the Popedom of S. Nicholas, who

» had it interred amidst the smoke of incense and the
» chant of hymns.» Four youths are bearing the body
of S. Cyril to S. Clemente. The nimbus is round his head;
the pallium upon the shoulders; and from the breast it is
covered with a rich pall ornamented with crosses. At the
head and foot a thurifer, holding an incense box in his left
hand, and with his right throwing the thurible high into
the air. A mourning youth with uplifted hands and an
aged cleric are next the bier. The Pope follows between
two Bishops. The one on the right also has the nimbus,
and the expressive sadness of the face indicates him to
be the mourning brother S. Methodius. The holy brothers
had brought the relics of S. Clement from the Cherso-
nesus to Rome, and this one must leave his human
affections beside them. The movement is very graceful,
and the arrangement of the grouping most ingenious.
A deacon behind bears the Papal cross, and the crowd
is broken by two croziers, and three spangled, *labarum*,
banners, surmounted by the greek cross, the earliest
representation of the kind in Rome, and introduced, no
doubt, to convey the mind to Constantinople, and
Cyril's first mission thence under the Emperor Michael.
The contrast between the Eastern Bishops with their
beards, and the close shaved Latin Clergy is well given.
The Pope is seen again at the Altar, which is covered
with a white cloth and upon it the missal and chalice,
of which nothing but the foot remains. He extends
his hands to the people with the salutation. « *Pax
Domini sit semper vobiscum.* »

XV.

THIS IS ANOTHER VOTIVE PICTURE. — «In the name of the » Lord, I. Beno Derapiza, for love of Blessed Clement and » the redemption of my soul had it painted.» The donor holds a candle by the medallion of S. Clement. The lady Mary is on the other side with her little boy Clement. Attilia a little girl behind the Father. The motto, «seeking me in prayer beware of hurtful things,» refers to the beautiful tradition of the affections in the picture above. The inscription of the higher picture now destroyed, «the Angel is preparing that tomb for him » submerged in the sea,» refers to the tradition that some time after S. Clement was cast into the sea with an anchor tied to his neck, the waters receded three miles, and the Christians found the body in a little marble temple. The miracle of the receding waters was repeated for several centuries on the anniversary of his death. The temple surrounded by the sea full of fishes, is seen in the central compartment, with the curtains looped up to show the altar with lights prepared for the mass which the Bishop and clergy are coming out of the City of Chersona to celebrate. A woman, a widow, is seen accompanying the procession with her child in her arms. While absorbed in prayer before the tomb of S. Clement she went away leaving him behind her. In the mean time the waters began to return, and the temple disappeared beneath them, thus depriving the poor woman of all hope of ever finding him. On the following anniversary

she returned for the purpose of picking up his bones, and when she arrived at the tomb she found him as if awaking from sleep at the altar of the Saint. In the picture before us she is represented stooping down to raise him. The inscription says, «Behold unhurt he lies whom the returning Mother finds again.»

XVI.

A large altar piece, the inscription beneath which is unfortunately ruined. In the centre a noble and dignified figure of the Saviour in the attitude of blessing according to the Greek rite, the only example as yet discovered in Rome. On either side are the Archangels, Michael and Gabriel, presenting to the saviour two ecclesiastics, one of whom holds a book and the other a Chalice. Next to the elder who probably is S. Cyril, from the circumstance that S. Clement by the action of his hand is evidently interceding for him, a devout client of his who removed his relics from the Crimæa, translated them to Rome, and was buried beside them. The saint on the other side with the gospel roll is S. Andrew the first Apostle of Scythia. The Moscovites have long boasted that he carried the gospel into their country as far as the mouth of the Borysthenes, to the mountains where the city of Kiow now stands, and to the frontiers of Poland. The action of his hand does not seem to refer to either brother, assuming that Methodius is holding the Chalice, but to the Gospel diffused by himself, and afterwards by Methodius in that Country. S. Michael the

champion of the Church with his wand of power, is naturally presenting Methodius, who converted the Bulgarian Prince Boigoris, and gave him the name of Michael. It is worth noticing that there is a certain identity in all the representations of S. Cyril in these frescos.

XVII.

A head of a female saint with halo, supposed to have been painted about the beginning of the fifth century

XVIII.

A head of some unknown personage supposed to have been painted about the year 300.

It is obvious that the difficulty of giving a precise date to paintings which are more recent than the decorations in the catacombs, and possess the greatest interest in the continuation of Christian art, being altogether unique in their kind and without comparison, is very great, and the decision necessarily arbitrary. Mere judgment of style is always fallacious, even in the works called of the great Masters. The larger compositions here, being voluntary gifts of Catholic piety, it is natural to refer to the time when the devotion of the Romans was greatly excited by the arrival of S. Clement's relics,

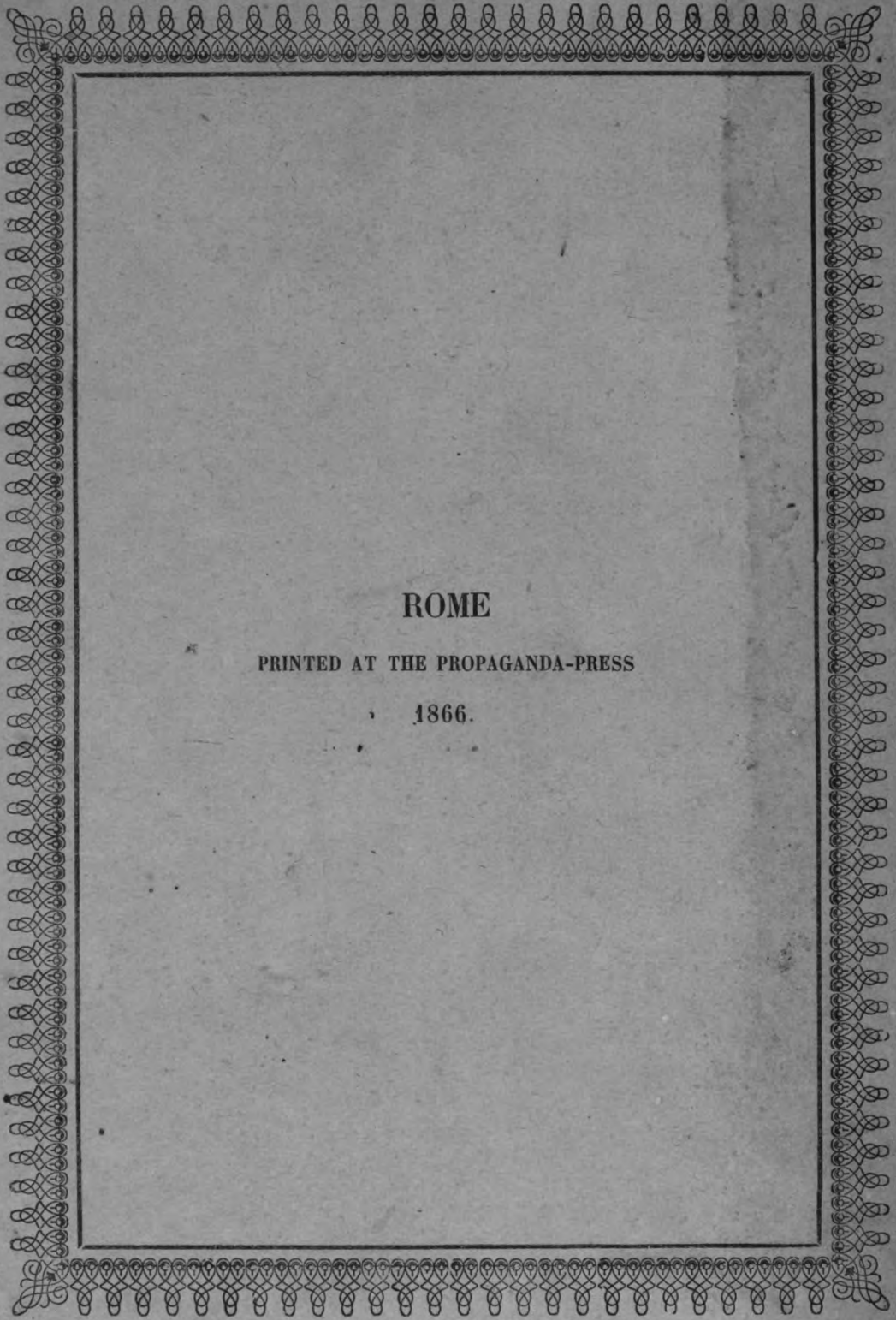
and the death of the holy missionary saint who brought them: that is towards 900. The dates ascribed to the other compositions are given on the authority of some of the most eminent living archaeologists and painters.

IMPRIMATUR

Fr. Hieronymus Gigli O. P. S. P. A. M.

IMPRIMATUR

Petrus Villanova-Castellacci Arch. Petr. Vicesg.



ROME

PRINTED AT THE PROPAGANDA-PRESS

1866.

